

NOTES of MEETING
HEREFORDSHIRE MARKET TOWNS FORUM
7p.m. WEDNESDAY 25th May 2016

In attendance were clerks and councillors from Leominster, Bromyard, Kington, Ross on Wye Councils as well as Hereford City Council and representing Ledbury Town Council Martin Eager & Debbie Baker.

Also in attendance Dawn Shepherd and one other (Chris) from Herefordshire CAB.

Apologies were accepted from Bob Barnes & Karen Mitchell

Election of new Chairman: Felicity Norman – Leominster Town Council & Ward Member.

Election of Vice Chairman: David Ravenscroft – Ross-on-Wye Town Council.

Election of Secretary: Paul Russell - Clerk to Leominster Town Council (re-elected).

An explanation of the forum and its purpose was given by Paul Russell for the benefit of new members and attendees.

From the last meeting Martin raised the fact that Ledbury Town Council had not received the promised S106 spreadsheet report. It transpired that Ledbury was the only town not to have received, Paul stated that this would be rectified and he would send the report.

Dawn Shepherd informed the meeting that Herefordshire CAB would close 24th June 2016. There followed a 50 minute discussion as to how CAB could be saved, operate in a basic form, keep a presence in the Market Towns as well as Hereford, and general service delivery now and in the future.

It will come as no surprise that it concluded that unless a minimum of £90k annually could be found to provide a very basic telephone advice service, then the service will cease completely.

It was agreed that all the Market Towns will be contacted and asked what if any IT based equipment and if possible a private room could be provided to provided an IT based CAB service using Skype and high speed internet. It was also suggested that there was grant money available for town councils to purchase computer equipment. It was also suggested that local libraries and customer service hubs could also be utilized for this service. For their part Herefordshire CAB will provide figures required to run this basic advice service and also investigate any match funding provision.

There followed a discussion on Herefordshire Councils dire lack of a 5 year land supply policy which is allowing appeals by predatory housing developers and the power (lack of) of Neighbourhood Plans because of this issue.

Also a discussion on Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) where it appears that some of our neighbouring towns have been dealing with barn conversion applications that require very little in the way of permissions and amenity provision. Steve Kerry, clerk to Hereford City Council has produced a discussion paper (to be emailed to all clerks) and was asking that Herefordshire Council adopts a HMO policy and guidelines at the soonest possible juncture.

Next meeting: calls to discuss further the land supply issues, HMO update, Asset Transfer progress issues, CAB update, Libraries and Customer Services, CIL updates, Youth Provision Service (September meeting). Paul will disseminate and invite relevant speakers.

Meeting closed 20.50hrs

Next Meeting Wednesday 27th July 2016.